DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 459 298 UD 034 602

TITLE	Children and Families in Urban Schools and Communities Roundtable (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 30-December 1, 2000). Fathers and Families Second-Tier Roundtable Series.
INSTITUTION	Pennsylvania Univ., Philadelphia. National Center on Fathers and Families.
PUB DATE	2000-12-00
NOTE	37p.; Roundtable co-sponsored by the Council of Great City Schools.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Proceedings (021)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; Cultural Differences; Educational Finance; *Educational Improvement; Educational Quality; *Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Minority Group Children; Policy Formation; Research Methodology; *Urban Schools

ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes a roundtable that brought together researchers, school leaders, practitioners, and policymakers to identify barriers to the education and well-being of urban children and families and explore opportunities to promote change. The first section summarizes the three commissioned papers: "Issues and Strategies Related to Improving Education in Urban Centers" (Vivian L. Gadsden); "How Research and Inquiry Can Inform Urban Education: Notes for Research Planning at OERI" (Michael S. Knapp and Rudy Crew); and "Boldness along the Road to Greater Student Achievement in Urban School Systems" (Sam Stringfield and Gerry House). Cross-cutting issues raised during the subsequent discussions are described in the reminder of the summary and include current and emerging issues for children and families in urban areas (e.g., rethinking approaches to standards, examining school financing, and applying other public models); research directions (e.g., examining intersections and contexts, understanding the classroom as a context, and reassessing the role of university-based research); implications for policymaking (e.g., bridge divided realms, match rhetoric with reality, and align incentives); and lessons for practice (e.g., adapting and updating promising models, rebuilding trust, and contextualizing collaboration). (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 459 298

Children and Families in Urban Schools and Communities Roundtable

National Center on Fathers and Families
University of Pennsylvania
Graduate School of Education

November-December 2000

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. Haider
National Center on Fathers and Families
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

UD034602

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Children and Families in Urban Schools and Communities Roundtable

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

The Context: OERI's Urban Education Initiative 1

The Urban Schools and Communities Roundtable 2

The "Five Cs" 3

Summary of Roundtable Papers 4

"Issues and Strategies Related to Improving Education in Urban Centers" by Vivian L. Gadsden 4

"How Research and Inquiry Can Inform Urban Education: Notes for Research Planning at OERI" by Michael S. Knapp and Rudy Crew 8

"Boldness Along the Road to Greater Student Achievement in Urban School Systems" by Sam Stringfield and Gerry House 10

Current and Emerging Issues for Children and Families in Urban Schools and Communities 12

Broadening the Context 12

Rethinking Approaches to Standards 12

Examining School Financing 12

Reconceptualizing the Discourse of Race and Learning in Comprehensive School Reform 13

Applying Other Public Models 14

Unpacking the Role of Power, Politics, and Governance in Education 14

Gauging the Pace, Scope, and Moment of Reform 15

Directions for Research 16

Examining Intersections and Contexts 16

Understanding the Classroom as a Context 17

Focusing on What Works—and What Works Over Time 17

Reassessing the Role of University-Based Research 17

continued

Table of Contents continued

Examining Variations in Achievement in Light of Decades of Reform 18

Reconsidering Culture and Achievement 18

Moving Beyond Problem-Based Research to Problem-Solving Research 19

Implications for Policymaking 20

Bridge Divided Realms 20

Promote Collaborations that Unite Research, Practice, and Community Organizations 21

Understand the Interplay of Federal, State, and Local Resources 22

Match the Rhetoric with Reality 22

Align Incentives 23

Support the Evaluation of Interventions 23

Shift the Scope of Change from the System to Systems 24

Lessons for Practice 25

Adapting and Updating Promising Models 25

Understanding Education and Social Services on the Ground 25

Rebuilding Trust 26

Building School-Level Capacity for Practice-Based Research 26

Looking at Teacher Education and Preparation 27

Pulling the Right Change Levers 27

Contextualizing Collaboration 27

Roundtable Agenda 28

Participant List 31

Introduction

On November 30 and December 1, 2000, more than 50 researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and other specialists in fields related to families, parents, and children's well-being within schools and communities gathered at the National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF) to convene the roundtable on Children and Families in Urban Schools and Communities: Increasing Opportunities and Promoting Change. This roundtable brought together researchers, school leaders, practitioners, and policymakers not only to identify barriers to the education and well-being of urban children and families but also to explore opportunities to promote change. The Council of Great City Schools co-sponsored the roundtable with NCOFF.

The Context: OERI's Urban Education Initiative

The roundtable's discussion was based on papers prepared for an initiative of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), begun under the leadership of former OERI Assistant Secretary C. Kent McGuire during President Clinton's administration. Both this initiative and the roundtable were intended to create a dialogue to advance systematic and responsive agendas for decreasing the vulnerability experienced by children and families in urban settings, increasing opportunities for student achievement and professional development, and improving the quality of urban schools.

OERI first commissioned these papers to solicit researchers' assessments of how it could improve its relationships with urban schools through policymaking and sponsoring research. Several of the researchers partnered with a superintendent from a major urban school district to address the following questions in their reports, integrating the perspectives of research and practice:

1. **The State of the Problem in Urban Centers.** What are the most critical issues facing students, teachers, principals, system leaders, and communities in our urban centers?

2. **Informing Research and Development at OERI.** What are the most effective ways for urban schools to inform research and development at local, state, and national levels to reflect the realities of urban problems?

3. **Using High-Quality Research.** What can federal education agencies and the research community do to increase the use of high-quality research and development findings in schools in our largest cities?

4. **Fostering Collaborations.** What strategies can federal and state governments develop to foster collaboration among researchers and urban system leaders to address issues facing urban public education?

OERI commissioned papers to solicit researchers' assessments of ways it could improve its relationships with urban schools through policymaking and the sponsoring of research.

The first section of this roundtable summary includes a synopsis of the analysis in each of the three commissioned papers, accompanied by related commentary from the research presentations. The cross-cutting issues raised during the subsequent discussions are described in the remaining sections of the summary.

The Urban Schools and Communities Roundtable

The primary goals of this roundtable, as for all of the roundtable discussions, were to:

1. Present a comprehensive analysis of issues and problems that have been identified in the literature;

2. Deepen the discourse between and among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers around the identified issues;

3. Engage participants in the development of a research agenda, as an initial activity in a longer-term research study;

4. Move the field and the roundtable past the discussion and presentation of ideas to focus intensively on sound research and sustain practice-driven research efforts; and

5. Involve practitioners in meaningful ways in the conceptualization of research projects pursued by NCOFF and others in the field.

Presenters delivered summaries of the key themes and findings from their research papers, after which discussants provided 15-minute responses. The discussants' presentations broadened each paper's scope, placing the issues raised in a wider context or suggesting new ways of conceptualizing them. Moderators led a subsequent discussion among all roundtable participants on the themes introduced and on new directions for research and practice, as well as implications for policymaking.

Several overarching themes, which are discussed in detail in the second section of this report, emerged from the discussion:

- Researchers and practitioners need to examine to what degree pedagogy and teacher expectations; teacher education, preparation, and interaction with parents; student relationships with their families; and the relationships between households and schools affect student achievement in urban settings.

- When considering strategies to narrow the gap in student achievement in urban settings, researchers and policymakers should consider factors such as students' ecological and economic contexts; race, class, and culture; and the intergenerational transfer of values regarding education.

- Researchers and policymakers should redefine the role of university-based research, taking steps to initiate more collaborative efforts that involve information-sharing and that bridge the gap between basic and applied research.

- When developing strategies to improve student achievement, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners should move beyond deficit models and instead identify the existing strengths of urban schools, as well as consider how to adapt successful reform models that have emerged in education and other public sectors.

OERI is in a unique position to assume a leadership role in developing and promoting collaborative efforts among urban schools, their constituencies, and the communities in which they are located.

- Given its ability to convene members of the research, policymaking, and practitioner communities—in addition to its ability to fund research and policy initiatives—OERI is in a unique position to assume a leadership role in developing and promoting collaborative efforts between urban schools, their constituencies, and the communities in which they are located.

- In order to bring about change in urban school systems, researchers and practitioners should move beyond problem-based research and pursue strategies that focus on discrete problems, on structural and

cultural issues related to implementation in urban contexts, on the integration of short-term and long-term approaches, and on the initiation of collaborative efforts.

- Schools are prime locations for informing research through practice; accordingly, researchers should interact directly with schools while, at the same time, practitioners need to build school-level capacity to engage in practice-based research. Both practitioners and researchers must learn how to engage the communities and families that form the context for urban education.

The "Five Cs"

Based on the roundtable conversation, Margaret Goertz of the Consortium for Research in Policy and Education developed a set of strategies that could guide efforts to perform research, create policy, and inform practice in urban schools and communities:

1. **Think comprehensively.** Particularly in the domain of "metropolitan" or urban studies, education may represent an institutional nexus for examining urban issues. This approach was intended in comprehensive school reform, but current efforts fail to have an impact beyond the classroom or school to reach the neighborhoods and the social services situated within them.

2. **Act collaboratively.** Collaboration, whether for research or interventions, should include every constituency of urban schools and communities: teachers, the educational system, legislators, media, the courts, law enforcement, social services, employers, parents and families, and community organizations.

3. **Build capacity.** In order to act collaboratively, however, schools and school districts need to build their own capacity to manage information and integrate lessons from research into their practice. Similarly, capacity-building is needed within the communities and families that form the context for students' schooling in order to engage the educational system.

4. **Create incentives.** One of the strongest incentives for motivating change is to provide "existence proofs" that demonstrate successful approaches—an effort that works in terms of pedagogy, collaboration, or community involvement. For example, the incentives for teachers to change their own behavior become clear when they are given an opportunity to witness change at another school serving the same types of students.

5. **Consider culture.** The importance of valuing the cultures of families and communities is essential to overcoming barriers to understanding a student's experiences and therefore his or her barriers to learning. In addition, understanding the emerging youth culture is an area that many researchers, policymakers, and teachers must engage, particularly since youth consumerism and cultural values seem to be crossing socioeconomic, racial, and geographical boundaries.

This roundtable summary synthesizes the discussion of these themes and their implications for policymaking, the directions they indicate for future research, and the lessons they impart for practice. The first section of this report contains summaries of the research papers presented at the roundtable, as well as discussants' and participants' commentaries. The second section describes the current and emerging issues in father poverty and social vulnerability that emerged during the roundtable discussions. The third section explores the implications of the issues raised for policymaking. The fourth offers new directions for research that arose from the discussion. The final section describes lessons learned for practice.

Summary of Roundtable Papers

NCOFF asked roundtable participants to explore the issues discussed in the three papers commissioned by OERI: (1) "Issues and Strategies Related to Improving Education in Urban Centers" by Vivian L. Gadsden; (2) "How Research and Inquiry Can Inform Urban Education: Notes for Research Planning at OERI" by Michael S. Knapp and Rudy Crew; and (3) "Boldness Along the Road to Greater Student Achievement in Urban School Systems" by Sam Stringfield and Gerry House.

"Issues and Strategies Related to Improving Education in Urban Centers"

Presenter: Vivian L. Gadsden, University of Pennsylvania

Discussants: Phillip Bowman, University of Illinois at Chicago
Mavis Sanders, Johns Hopkins University

Moderator: Jon Supovitz, University of Pennsylvania

Vivian L. Gadsden's paper offers her perspectives on the questions raised by OERI, as they relate to the problems currently facing urban education. She based her analysis on research studies and critical reviews of urban studies literature; conversations with informal focus groups; reviews of OERI-funded research and development; and data from reviews of school system initiatives.

In her presentation, Gadsden discussed approaches and mechanisms that may prove useful for OERI in planning and engaging open discussions that lead to systematic and responsive efforts within communities. Gadsden framed her analysis around four assumptions:

1. Urban communities, schools, and school systems are not isolated organizations but components of a singular structure of "community" in which differences among individual neighborhoods, institutions, constituencies, and stakeholders are reconciled through a shared commitment to children and their future;

Urban communities, schools, and school systems are not isolated organizations but components of a singular structure of "community."

2. Researchers across domains in education and across disciplines that study urban groups share a common purpose with practitioners;

3. The traditional focus on schools as the source and repository of all problems for children requires revision; and

4. Schools in urban settings beset by poverty, crime, and social problems have the difficult challenge of creating and negotiating a nexus between the harsh realities of family and community life faced by a high number of students and the expectations of teachers, parents, communities, policymakers, and society.

Critical Issues in Urban Centers

Gadsden also organized the problems facing urban centers into three distinct categories: (1) issues of system organization and planning; (2) cultural and linguistic discontinuity; and (3) issues that cut across home, school, and community contexts.

Issues of System Organization and Planning. Citing Hill and Celio's *Fixing Urban Schools*, Gadsden suggests

that urban schools face two kinds of problems—both intellectual and political. The former involves the absence of a guiding philosophy for reform; the latter centers on the ability to develop and sustain coalitions of sufficient duration to effect change and weather resistance. Gadsden cited the following five areas of system organization and planning as particularly problematic:

1. **The need for systems change and appropriate school finance structures.** The financial systems that govern urban school systems frequently complicate missions and undermine change. Systems change involves two dimensions: (1) changing the historically adversarial relationships that exist between large urban centers and state government; and (2) recognizing that money alone will not alleviate problems.

Rather than raise the ceiling for achievement, schools often become stuck focusing on students' performance at grade level and tend to revel in short-term gains.

2. **Collective bargaining and teaching.** Little doubt exists that collective bargaining creates a layer of discomfort. Its adversarial status must be replaced with a more reasonable approach in which the issues of teachers as workers and children as learners who trust teachers are reconciled rather than compromised.

3. **Relationships between teachers and students and the problems of low achievement.** In many schools, it is not clear whether teachers are placing the proper amount of importance on building reciprocal relationships with students in the classroom setting. Thus, rather than raise the ceiling for achievement, schools often become stuck in facilitating students' performance at grade level and reveling in short-term gains.

4. **Teacher quality and the recruitment of good teachers.** Although there is some consensus that ensuring teacher and teaching quality is important, there is less agreement about the best way to achieve that quality or to recruit professionals who can contribute to the missions of urban schools.

5. **The curriculum and appropriate use of standards.** Those involved in urban education describe their school districts as having too many overlapping and competing agendas, which reduces the likelihood that reform efforts will be successful. Those who support the development of standards to address this problem believe standards would establish clear expectations for what students are to be taught; set high targets for student performance; allow for the creation of an aligned system of tests, curricula, training, and teaching materials; and attach real consequences to test results for schools. However, the inherent problem with standards is that they may be interpreted without a corresponding vision and with minimal expectations of teaching and learning.

The relative absence of a critical discourse about diversity and culture—above and beyond the recognition of difference alone—requires a re-analysis of approaches used in teaching.

Cultural and Linguistic Discontinuity . The problems contributing to cultural discontinuity involve the ability of schools to respect, understand, and accommodate the linguistic and cultural differences of immigrants and ethnic minorities in the United States. The relative absence of a critical discourse on diversity and culture—above and beyond the recognition of difference alone—requires a re-analysis of the approaches used in teaching, a reassessment of instructional tools used to convey the meaning of literacy within different contexts, and a discussion of what counts as knowing and knowledge.

Issues that Intersect Home, School, and Community Contexts. Many of the critical issues affecting urban school systems involve the lives of children outside of the school, the ways in which problems within families and com-

munities intersect with students' ability to attend and learn in school, and the structural barriers in society that reduce access and opportunity. The specific issues include the following: (1) poverty, race, and vulnerability among low-income families; (2) students' and parents' perceptions of the value of schooling; (3) students' lack of spirit and hope for the future; (4) the lackluster state of school buildings and school presence; (5) decline in literacy in urban settings; (6) violence and the emotional needs of students; and (7) the relative absence (or distinctive presence) of a coherent analysis that helps disentangle past problems and present dilemmas.

OERI should investigate how research dissemination efforts might reach practitioners in a more effective, accessible, and user-friendly manner.

Informing Research and Development Planning at OERI

Gadsden's paper proposed four approaches to inform research and development planning at OERI:

1. **Creating a meeting series for urban sites within a small cluster of states.** Examining regional slices of national urban education settings would afford OERI the opportunity both to learn directly from practitioners about the critical issues they face and to participate in the development of agenda-setting and implementation in urban school districts.

2. **Forming an advisory group or formal entity convening urban school leaders and researchers.** Through this entity, OERI could assemble, document, and apply the collective wisdom of those administrative and instructional leaders involved in urban education.

3. **Requiring a focus on urban systems in OERI-funded research centers or creating a separate entity** solely committed to urban-based, practice-focused initiatives. Through these forums, OERI could facilitate the establishment of reciprocal relationships in which centers provide specific services to urban systems and, in turn, educators within these systems have access to new developments specifically tailored to increasing their capacity for dealing with day-to-day, real-world issues.

4. **Gathering online information.** OERI could utilize the Internet to convene urban education leaders and even individual teachers in regular, public electronic discussions of key issues.

The Use of High-Quality Research by Practitioners

With the growth and implementation of new areas of study such as teacher research, the possibilities for engaging practitioners in meaningful discussion about education and schooling have increased, along with the capacity of school educators to identify and utilize sound research. However, it has become evident that practitioners often find it difficult to use research in innovative ways. In order to do so, practitioners require continual efforts that enable them to work with and learn from researchers. Gadsden suggests that OERI take the following steps to increase the use of research among practitioners:

Revise a program of research and technical assistance. A program of this nature would help both researchers and practitioners better understand how research dissemination efforts might reach practitioners in a more effective manner. In addition, OERI could investigate how professional training might be improved so that research findings are more accessible and user-friendly.

Provide periodic print or online syntheses and critical reviews of major educational issues. Gadsden suggests that OERI develop two types of publications: (1) one that would offer critical commentary on research, helping practitioners and others make informed decisions about the strengths and weaknesses of competing perspectives; and (2) a second that highlights major issues affecting urban classroom practice, school, and student performance.

Utilize existing vehicles and multiple types of interactions. OERI and its centers should pursue relationships with organizations such as teacher associations, affinity groups, and unions to disseminate translated research findings to practitioners.

Utilize schools of education at research institutions to work with urban school systems on generating new conversations about research. OERI should increase practitioners' access to—as well as identification and use of—sound research. It could do so by providing incentives to schools of education with a strong research focus that are also located near urban school systems to work directly with those involved in improving student achievement.

Fostering Collaboration

Part of the difficulty in creating and sustaining viable cooperation between agencies and constituencies is the lack of public investment and vision in the development of long-term relationships between institutions that are seemingly interdependent yet isolated. Gadsden suggests two primary strategies that OERI can develop to help urban systems build upon existing efforts to promote successful collaboration:

1. **Encourage research partnerships** between and among school systems and community-based organizations, research institutions and centers, and individual researchers. These partnerships should be designed to enhance mutual respect, information-sharing, and reciprocity of services by fostering an exchange of knowledge and experience. By requiring or rewarding sustained practitioner involvement, OERI will not only promote a better understanding of the value of research but also fundamentally improve the quality and applicability of the research that it funds for both policymaking and practice.

Creating and sustaining viable cooperation between agencies and constituents is complicated by a lack of public investment in the development of long-term relationships between institutions that are seemingly interdependent yet isolated.

2. **Create a core of grant competitions that will be awarded for collaborative projects that build—and build upon—researcher , practitioner, and community relationships.** OERI could fund new grant competitions that award joint urban education system and research institution collaborative projects. To succeed, however, such an award should require that the two institutions have an existing and demonstrable relationship and have pursued a specific agenda for ongoing work.

"How Research and Inquiry Can Inform Urban Education: Notes for Research Planning at OERI"

Presenter: David Florio, Consultant for the Office of Research and Improvement (OERI) for authors Michael Knapp and Rudy Crew of the University of Washington

Discussants: Jomills H. Braddock, University of Miami
Ira Harkavy, University of Pennsylvania

Moderator: Mitchell Chester, School District of Philadelphia

The purpose of the paper presented by David Florio and written by Michael Knapp and Rudy Crew was to inform future research planning and development activities that were being undertaken by OERI. These activities were intended to foster meaningful dialogue on urban education issues between researchers and practitioners. The paper contends that both stakeholders wish to learn from each other and that OERI is in a position to facilitate the relationship-building process—ultimately for the betterment of urban schools.

Systematic Inquiry and the Division Between Research and Practice

The phrase "systematic inquiry" suggests a broad range of activities that includes both conventionally construed scholarship and other types of analytic work that can inform educators' practice. According to Florio, inquiry is an important aspect of the urban educator's practice and involves observing student patterns of performance, searching for explanations for these patterns, and seeking out better ways of teaching as demonstrated in other research. The paper suggests that research is more likely to answer important questions about urban education when informed by the scholar's immersion in the world of practice. This immersion can take a variety of forms, but at a minimum it requires a level of interaction between researchers and practitioners.

Despite sharing a common interest in the problems and challenges of urban education, educators and researchers continue to work largely in isolation from each other. The reasons are several: limited understanding of each other's craft knowledge, assumptions about the relative worth of each other's knowledge base, and limited opportunities for professional interaction.

According to Knapp and Crew, common explanations for the gap are not especially helpful or accurate and ultimately fuel widely-held perceptions that research, particularly by university scholars, has little relevance in the field of urban education.

Research is more likely to answer important questions about urban education when informed by the scholar's immersion in the world of practice.

The paper outlines three ways in which systematic inquiry can serve a key role in closing the existing gap:

1. **Engagement in systematic inquiry to build intellectual community.** Urban educators do want opportunities to better understand the nature of the problems in urban settings and to gain perspective on their work. They need ways to both enter the conversations that lie at the heart of research and inquiry and initiate conversations in their own environment. Systematic inquiry provides a natural focus for community-building, thereby opening an avenue to a wider horizon of ideas and possibilities for urban educators.

2. **Engagement with research and researchers to sharpen urban educators' questions, frameworks, and capacity for inquiry.** Participation in research and interaction with researchers can aid educators in developing important questions and theories on what is happening in their own settings as well

as the education system as a whole. These skills enhance educators' capacity to make systematic inquiry an integral part of their work.

3. **Inquiry to provide an occasion for exploring and negotiating conflict.** Most discussions on urban education involve a struggle among participants who have fixed positions based more on differing values and unequal distribution of power than in information or insight into what is actually occurring in urban schools. Systematic inquiry can offer an opportunity for moving the conversation beyond fixed and irreconcilable positions.

Pressing Concerns in Urban Education

According to Knapp and Crew, many problems in urban education can be addressed through systematic inquiry undertaken by urban educators themselves, external researchers, or both.

The paper isolates the pressing concerns in urban education as: (1) low student performance, disparities in performance, and the role of standards in enhancing performance; (2) the uneven quality of curriculum, teaching, and teacher preparation; (3) the challenge of organizing schools and support systems that promote the learning of students and that of the professionals working in schools; (4) the development of leadership capacity among teachers, school administrators, and district administrators; (5) the stability of vision at the "top" of the system and the sustainability of coalitions supporting instructional improvement; and (6) public and parental understanding of, or confidence in, what schools are doing and what improvement efforts seek to accomplish.

OERI's Role in Building Informational Highways

Knapp and Crew believe that OERI, at the time the papers were commissioned, was instituting measures to address many pressing concerns in urban education. However, it was OERI's stance that, in order to do so, there must be a substantial, bi-directional flow of ideas, questions, and findings.

Since President Bush's inauguration in January of 2001, priorities at OERI may have shifted. But at the time of the roundtable, OERI believed that such "highway-building" could occur naturally in the context of four kinds of grantmaking: (1) supporting long-term research grant programs that inform pressing topics in urban education practice; (2) developing high-quality mechanisms for short-term response to urban educators' questions about their practice; (3) funding the integration of research with program or institutional design; and (4) stimulating, modeling, and studying sustained interaction between urban educators and the scholarly community. OERI acknowledges the fact that none of these mechanisms will eliminate the substantial barriers to sustained interaction, but they will set the stage for relationship building and shed light on the possibilities for connecting research and practice directly and continuously.

To help build cultures of inquiry and application, OERI needs to take full account of the considerable constraints on urban educators' time, energy, and expertise in inquiry, and on researchers' time and familiarity with urban education settings.

Concluding Thoughts

The paper concludes with the following reflections and recommendations:

1. **OERI needs to acknowledge that research and inquiry into urban education may lead to uncomfortable conclusions.** Systematic inquiry may reveal questionable practices, polices, and institutional designs that are in place. Such findings may or may not be used or be perceived as useful in light of prevailing wisdom or policy convictions.

2. **The production of research that urban educators find useful depends not just on the research itself** —what is studied, how it is conducted and interpreted, what it finds, and how it is made available to users—but also on organizational conditions within schools, districts, and academic institutions. To help build cultures of inquiry and application, OERI needs to take full account of the considerable constraints on urban educators' time, energy, and expertise, as well as on researchers' time and familiarity with urban education settings.

3. **OERI needs to be realistic about the role it can play given the magnitude of its resources.** Alone, OERI does not command sufficient resources to realize the principles discussed in all or even many major urban centers. While it may find ways to expand its resource base, OERI must still be selective about what it can support and be careful about what it promises to the study of urban education and the support of urban school centers. Similarly, support of collaborative work should be the result of careful identification of problems and selection of venues with the highest potential for leverage.

Support of collaborative work should be the result of careful identification of problems and selection of venues with the highest potential for leverage.

4. **In supporting research with an urban focus, OERI should refrain from locating the problem in academic scholarship.** While publications in academic journals are often opaque to those outside of the research community, research as accumulated and interpreted over time is what makes the creation, assessment, and dissemination of complex models possible.

10

"Boldness Along the Road to Greater Student Achievement in Urban School Systems"

Presenter: Sam Stringfield, Johns Hopkins University

Discussants: Gary Orfield, Harvard University
William Trent, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Moderator: Christopher Ashford, University of Pennsylvania

Sam Stringfield, working with the superintendent of Memphis City Schools, Gerri House, devised an approach that OERI could use to contribute to the creation of large-scale success in urban education. Stringfield's paper emphasizes the need to promote a small number of well-documented success stories in urban education to provide leadership for other urban districts, state legislatures, and federal courts.

Stringfield's paper briefly recounts the fieldwork of Bob Slavin and Nancy Madden, founders of *Success for All*, a research initiative which has spawned a host of school improvement organizations. Slavin and Madden's work initially had little impact on educational practice; however, test scores eventually began to rise dramatically as referrals to special education dropped in a similar fashion. As a result of *Success for All*, a host of educational reform groups were created—as Stringfield notes, at a pace akin to the proliferation of "dot.com" companies after only a handful of initial successes.

Some reform groups have realized success and made contributions to improving urban education, but few have brought about the remarkable success needed to reform urban school systems.

While some reform groups have realized gains in improving urban education, **few have brought about the remarkable** success Stringfield believes is needed to reform urban school systems. He sites several reasons, including: (1) a lack of widely shared goals; (2) a belief that fail-

ure to achieve improvement goals would be disastrous; and (3) a lack of aggressive recruitment, training, and retention of highly-skilled professionals. Stringfield's conclusion is that OERI can succeed where others have failed.

His proposal for OERI's role in improving urban education involves two steps:

1. **OERI should select five cities whose schools and school system are prime candidates for dramatic improvement.** OERI should base site selection on the superintendent's level of commitment to serving as the leader of the reform, as well as on several criteria that the system would meet: reallocating its existing resources to align with the reform agenda; committing to the improvement of all schools in the district; garnering solid external political support (e.g., from the mayor or governor); agreeing to unprecedented external evaluation; and conducting a multiyear, dramatically accelerated teacher and principal recruitment campaign.

Schools, particularly low-performing ones, would have to choose a reform design for themselves that, if not successful in three years, would be replaced with one from a much more limited list of relatively well-proven options.

2. **In the selected systems, OERI should help build long-term systemic support.** Schools, particularly low-performing ones, should choose a reform design that—if it is unsuccessful in three years—could be replaced by a well-proven model. Whole-school, targeted professional development within the bounds of the school's chosen reform program should become the norm. The system should fund school-level, relational databases that create electronic, multiyear portfolios for all students. The district should organize a standing committee to advise the superintendent on the progress of reform and fund an ongoing external evaluation.

Stringfield believes that his proposal utilizes OERI's current strengths, particularly its outreach capabilities. He also suggests that OERI should develop working relationships with other federal agencies such as Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Commerce; create coordinated initiatives between the school systems and other organizations; and obtain support from major foundations.

While money alone will not solve the problems in urban education, potential exemplary reforms are not moving forward due to a lack of fiscal support.

The paper concludes with the statement that money alone will not solve problems in urban education. However, as Stringfield states, potential exemplary reforms are not moving forward due to a lack of fiscal support. It would be OERI's task not only to help these reform programs with financial backing, but also to help them gain the data, knowledge, and support necessary to bring about change in urban schools.

The three paper presentations helped participants think strategically about the ways in which OERI can enhance existing work, foster collaborative relationships between researchers and practitioners, and help research contribute to policy-making and practice in a meaningful way. The key issues that emerged from the discussion are summarized here: (1) broadening the context; (2) rethinking approaches to standards; (3) examining school financing; (4) reconceptualizing the discourse of race and learning; (5) applying other public models; (6) unpacking the role of power and politics; and (7) gauging the pace, scope, and moment of reform.

Issues such as employment, the criminal justice system, and social services must also be factored into discussions of both student outcomes and the context for schooling.

Broadening the Context

Problems with student achievement may be more a matter of ecology than of individual ability. The link between education and social policy not only explores what happens in schools, but also considers a broader context, especially in urban areas, whose complex dynamics affect student outcomes. As Phillip Bowman of the University of Illinois at Chicago suggests, "Urban students, especially from low-income families of color, bring with them issues that interact with what happens in the classroom. We discuss the motivations of individuals, but they are inextricably bound with neighborhood, family, and community." Broadening the narrow focus of student achievement by applying perspectives from human as well as social and community development places questions about the motivations of students in a different light.

Another ecological issue is the intergenerational transfer of values within families, specifically its relationship to schooling and the corresponding legacies that can affect student performance and outcomes. As one participant noted, there is little doubt that family context affects the behavioral and academic problems that students express in school. The intergenerational development of the child must be viewed in terms of human development in the context of families—not only the "nuclear" family but also the extended family. Issues such as employment, the criminal justice system, and social services must also be factored into discussions of both student outcomes and the context for schooling.

Rethinking Approaches to Standards

Standards are a necessary but insufficient means for dealing with the complex problems that emerge in urban schools, particularly for low-income students of color. The current emphasis on standards in urban schools is narrowly focused both in the classroom and in the curriculum, limiting a consideration of the neighborhood/family context of the often difficult situations presented by urban educational settings. Addressing achievement problems requires a movement beyond the debate of whether standards are needed and toward a discussion of how they are currently insufficient for many urban students. According to Bowman, "If the outcome is simply for students to score better on a test as a primary focus of reform, we need to better incorporate the concerns of urban families and communities in the formulation and implementation of standards-based education."

Examining School Financing

As Mavis Sanders of Johns Hopkins University mentioned, the issue of school

financing—and the role it plays in influencing student outcomes—requires specific attention. The intersection of the student, the local tax base, and government funding is one of the most difficult relationships to study, but it is imperative, since inadequate funding leads to chronically unequal outcomes for urban schools. While school financing needs to be rethought, in particular the development of a strategy for funding allocation, the terms should not be cast in absolute dollars. Some schools and districts suffer severe levels of underfunding over time and have amassed deep and intractable problems. In these cases, participants suggested that student needs—i.e., for social workers, programs, and other resources to help promote academic achievement—should be the criteria for funding allocation. Further, additional financial resources to urban school systems must be allocated over an extended period of time—not, for example, as three years of emergency funding with no longer-term strategies for continuing that level of support.

Standards are a necessary but insufficient means for dealing with the complex problems of urban schools, particularly for low-income students of color.

Many participants noted that, if vouchers are currently considered to be the most viable approach to reforming education, securing a baseline of resources for urban schools will be a struggle, while obtaining additional funds seems highly improbable. One participant noted that the effectiveness and implications of voucher systems in promoting school reform and improving outcomes for inner-city youth is still unknown. A Milwaukee study revealed that, of more than 300 students whose parents used vouchers to subsidize tuition at private schools, only 85 had remained enrolled in private schools after five years.

Another approach is to reconsider how public dollars are both appropriated and allocated. As Judith Johnson of the Wallace-Readers Digest Funds mentioned, there is a need to move away from absolute criteria toward value-added criteria for allocation. Greater resources are needed to level the playing field for urban school districts; yet, the current trend is to punish poor-performing districts and reward stronger ones. Even if federal dollars are targeted toward poor students, it is possible that needed support may not ultimately reach their communities, since urban parents and districts often do not have significant lobbying power. Thus, a real investment in sustained reform and professional development would require a substantial commitment by a presidential administration to shift how public education dollars are allocated. "We can always spend the same amount of money, but if those resources are used in the same way, progress will never be made," said Johnson.

Reconceptualizing the Discourse of Race and Learning in Comprehensive School Reform

While the adage is publicly shared that "all students can excel," it runs counter to the stereotypes held by teachers, principals, and students themselves, who believe that certain students cannot, indeed, achieve. Current assumptions about the academic achievement of students of color are by-products of well-established belief systems and structures. According to Bowman, "These ideologies are pervasive, but we don't discuss them. They raise fundamental questions about racial, ethnic, and class barriers to achievement." However, as William Trent of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, suggests, "The question is not whether or not African-American children can learn, but why their performance is at its current level." More students at urban schools are achieving at lower levels than in previous years, giving rise to a disturbing pattern: the longer students of color stay in urban schools, the less like their white peers they perform.

A real investment in sustained reform and professional development would require a shift in the appropriation of public dollars and in the ways those dollars are allocated.

Although the Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) measure sanctions 282 models, these reform approaches have yet to prove their success. While the chal-

lenge is to stress the intensity and depth of the reform, Trent is not convinced that the sentiment underlying CSR—that a rising tide lifts all boats—will help those students with the greatest challenges and barriers perform better. After controlling for socioeconomic status, African-American students in some of the best school districts continue to be the lowest testers in both the distribution and means of statewide results. CSR requires a strategy and set of targeted incentives for realizing positive outcomes, using race and class to target improvement. Unfortunately, as Trent states, these strategies and incentives remain "an unpopular notion."

The politics and rhetoric of school reform are based on short-term outcomes. Could they be reconfigured to provide incentives and rewards based on reducing the racial achievement gap? Such an approach may advance efforts towards changing a culture around academic achievement that first ascribed the gap to genetic differences and now to pathologizing the culture, structure, and character of certain minority groups. Trent added, "For the first time, we are considering the nature of health disparities not in terms of genetics, but in contextual terms. Educational issues are similar to health challenges—it is about a systematic, historic context that is institutional and not individual." He recommends that the discourse be widened to consider a range of contexts, which can only be accomplished if the failure to examine what actually happens in the classroom is addressed. He also reminded the group to acknowledge: "We are building on past events. They are exacerbated inequalities that, if the context itself is not addressed, will only increase no matter what we do."

There has been a general shift in the public sector paradigm from an individual model to an ecological one.

Applying Other Public Models

Urban education, for the most part, has relied upon models developed within the field of education for ideas when constructing reform initiatives. However, some participants suggested that urban education should cast its eyes towards other public reform models, particularly in the health care industry, for fresh ideas and approaches. A number of reasons for health care's level of success are evident. One, according to Judith Johnson, is the use of a model that could rally relevant constituencies around a concrete issue, generate a viable policy, and enforce that policy through legislation. She believes that education currently lacks "the alignment of stars" needed to make comparable changes.

Sanders finds that the key differences between heath care and education reform involve the focus on individual versus group improvement and short-term versus long-term goals. "In health care, one individual is touched, and becomes healthier," she noted. "In education, one individual achieves, but there is also a persistent, intergenerational gap between those who have educational opportunities and those who do not." In the long-term, she suggested, education needs to ensure environments in which individual children and entire cohorts of children in both present and future generations can achieve academically.

Unpacking the Role of Power, Politics, and Governance in Education

As Judith Johnson succinctly stated, "Education is politics," to which Velma La Point of Howard University added, "And politics is power." While there has been a general shift in the public sector paradigm from an individual model to an ecological one, when those who hold polital power cannot advance beyond decontextualizing individual achievement, low-income urban students remain stuck in poor performance ruts.

Given the vicissitudes of the political arena, long-term reform measures are seldom discussed or instituted. "Why are no superintendents committed to long-term reform?" asked Gary Orfield of Harvard University. "Because the short life-expectancy of their own tenures creates an incentive to produce a short-term pro-

gram without any measures or considerations for long-term impact." He also believes that school boards, particularly in the inner city, tend to be equally short-sighted and politically-minded. Support for longer-term reform, he commented, also fails to come from governors and mayors, while federal investment is dispersed and of limited magnitude.

The disjunction between intentions and outcomes in commissioning the papers presented at this roundtable aptly illustrates this problem. OERI approached a number of school superintendents, asking them to co-author these papers with a researcher; however, by the time the papers were completed, all of the superintendents were no longer serving in their original appointments.

Orfield does believe that certain conditions can be fostered to promote sustained reform—even in politically volatile circumstances. He suggests systematically changing the role of superintendents and boards to eliminate their localized, politicized nature and extending reforms beyond the tenure of individual officers and administrators. In that case, the power of the school board would need to be reduced, and the superintendent given independent executive powers with fixed terms in office that provide sufficient time for implementing long-term reforms.

"We are discussing multigenerational effects and multigenerational solutions, but what do we do for the current generation?" asked Lorion.

Gauging the Pace, Scope, and Moment of Reform

Several participants pointed out a disconnect between the time needed to conduct cumulative basic research and the immediate needs of school districts, administrators, and students. While pressing needs can be identified quickly, it is often difficult for longer-term research to address them in an adequate timeframe. Similarly, it is unclear what moment in a student's career represents the optimum time for intervention: Kindergarten? Early adolescence? The high school years? A number of questions were raised on this topic: When do students really become at-risk? Should interventions span several years of students' educational experiences, or is it sufficient to intervene at only one point in time?

As Ray Lorion of the University of Pennsylvania commented, "We are discussing multigenerational effects and solutions, but what do we do for the current generation?" Single-generation interventions are always geared toward fixing the immediate crises at hand, and Lorion pointed out that CSR's current approach may inadequately address the reality of much-needed triage, as well as the fact that a change in student outcomes or performance can only be realized by investing in successive cohorts of students. He wondered, "Is success through CSR, as it is currently stated, actually achievable? Or, is the aim to change student performance at a certain grade level?"

The problem not only includes whether interventions should occur at one point in time but also when they should be applied. Gary Orfield added that, since the 1960s, an emphasis has been placed on the importance of early preschool and elementary education, while students encounter different problems and challenges at different levels of schooling. Adolescents demonstrate different needs—in terms of new skills sets and coping with peer pressure—than high school students whose greatest risk is dropping out. "Many Title I funds are allocated to the younger grades, but we do have to do something at the high school level as well," Orfield suggested.

As William Darity of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill proposed, focusing on students at an early age does not necessarily "inoculate" them from effects that can emerge at later points in their schooling. In this regard, he noted, the need for triage will always exist. Focusing on early intervention alone erroneously assumes that the events affecting a student's outcomes only happen early in life, while malleability is actually more evident in adolescence.

Directions for Research

Participants discussed new directions in basic and applied educational research, identifying new avenues for scholars to pursue. These areas include: (1) examining intersections and contexts; (2) understanding the classroom as a context; (3) focusing on what works; (4) reassessing the role of university-based research; (5) examining variations in achievement; (6) reconsidering culture and achievement; and (7) moving beyond problem-based research. The following section summarizes participants' recommendations.

Examining Intersections and Contexts

Participants agreed that researchers must cease the segmentation of educational processes and outcomes from the context in which a child lives and develops. Research must be reconfigured to pursue an understanding of student performance in terms of family relationships and relationships between households and schools. In particular, it is critical to examine the interactions between parents and teachers—for example, at parent-teacher sessions—to examine the assumptions of many teachers about children's behavioral and learning problems. Teachers in urban settings require instruction that provides better perspectives not only on classroom dynamics but also about the context in which students live.

Researchers must also seek to better understand the ecologies and economies with which urban students interact in ways that also link family and school issues. The literature on the family-school nexus focuses on the issue of parental involvement in their local schools. However, according to Bowman, there is a need to conduct research that clarifies further the impediments to learning based on family and community problems, particularly on understanding how teachers work with families to address the effective provision of social services in schools.

Bowman mentioned that, while research has placed greater attention on these issues, the findings have been informed by gross correlations between aggregate measures of neighborhood conditions and student achievement. This research, he suggests, has been poorly informed, conceptualized, and designed with methodologies that do not advance an understanding of the mechanisms and dynamics of urban settings: "There are clear effects, but research has to be better construed to clarify what the critical issues are and how they need to be addressed." Bowman recommends that researchers work to refine the concept of how schools operate within ecological systems and how that context impinges on student achievement.

Researchers must cease the segmentation of educational processes and outcomes from the context in which a child lives and develops.

John Stanfield of Morehouse College pointed out that researchers also have a responsibility not only to study schools and schooling but also to spend time in schools themselves. "They may find that urban parents care about their schools and children's learning experiences and would be willing to engage schools if they had clear guidelines or incentives for their involvement," he explained. If researchers would examine the political as well as intellectual and academic aspects of educational systems, they could also shed light on parental and community involvement in ways that have not yet been identified.

Understanding the Classroom as a Context

A recent study conducted by Mitchell Chester of the School District of Philadelphia highlights the need for a closer examination of pedagogy and teacher expectations—essentially, the classroom climate—on student achievement. Chester conducted site visits at a Philadelphia public comprehensive high school with a 99.5 percent African-American student population that has been struggling to make academic progress. He regularly attended math classes and witnessed what he described as "horrible" math instruction. However, in one class the pedagogy was different: students were required to work together; the rigor and quality of the work was higher; and the teacher exhibited a command not only of teaching skills but also of content matter. "In that class, the message sent to students was decidedly different than in other classrooms—the teacher had high expectations," explained Chester. The outcomes were obvious; he reported it was the only math class in which virtually every student regularly attended.

Educational research tends to be developed around deficit models that blame shortfalls in student achievement on their background, families, or cultures.

While students in this math class were not performing at significantly higher levels than those in other classrooms, he believes a broader implication applies: regardless of external influences, what happens in classrooms can have a profound impact on student outcomes—in this case, promoting better attendance rates.

Focusing on What Works—and What Works Over Time

Educational research tends to be conceptualized and conducted using deficit models that emphasize shortfalls in student achievement or shortcomings in educational institutions. A number of participants suggested that researchers should begin to identify strengths as well as deficiencies to provide a more comprehensive—and, ultimately, more useful—set of directions for improving urban schools systems and student performance.

Such a focus on what has worked in urban settings should also be conducted over time. Schools need an equally comprehensive assessment of student academic achievement through longitudinal, not just cross-sectional, studies. These studies should not only examine an individual student's past performance over time, but also that of the school itself. In pursuing this line of inquiry, one participant cautioned that researchers must also endeavor to adjust their research methodologies or the interpretations of their findings according to the changes that occur in the school or in the students over time.

Reassessing the Role of University-Based Research

"The role of researchers, particularly educational researchers, in education reform tends to be understated, ignored, or criticized for what we do not do well," said Trent. The complaints, however, are often not unfounded. First, research has failed to inform teacher education about how to prepare instructors for the work they must ultimately perform in the classroom. Teachers may understand pedagogy and subject matter, but not necessarily what being effective in an urban classroom entails. Second, researchers are sometimes guilty of mismanaging the information they generate. "They need to make the data widely available and provide information in ways and in terms that are accessible for teachers and school administrators," he explained.

Another key issue emerging from the group's discussions was the need for greater collaboration and information-sharing efforts between researchers and between researchers and practitioners. According to Jomills Braddock of the

University of Miami, such collaboration offers a critical advantage: The communities being studied may be able to identify common themes, problems, and strategies for addressing the underlying problems that allow achievement gaps to endure. These partnerships would also benefit from an exchange of personnel—having practitioners involved in research projects from their inception, and having on-site research personnel present in schools. "To truly bridge the gaps between research and practice," Braddock added, "one of the most important challenges is to study the process of fusing research and practice itself.

If researchers and practitioners were able to get beyond the flash words of "race" and "culture" to technique and example, it may enable schools, as well as school systems, to understand how these dynamics are embedded in the classroom experience.

Examining Variations in Achievement in Light of Decades of Reform

The racial gap in student achievement and high school dropout rates is once again widening, particularly in urban areas. Some participants suggested that this trend signals a significant weakness in education reform—that reform models implemented since the 1980s have, in many ways, failed minority students in urban settings.

Researchers have also been examining the source of intra- and interclass variations in achievement, with no definitive findings. Part of the problem, according to Darity, is that while the definition of "class" may currently capture income, occupation, and educational background, there are other indicators of wealth differentials that are not observable. They include inheritance and savings, home ownership, and other measures that indicate an individual's or family's degree of financial security. "What may look like comparable families may actually be very different," Darity said. "There is a powerful implication here. While the racial gap in standardized test scores may be explained by wealth differentials, the closing of the gap may not be immediately measurable." For example, intergenerational considerations may affect outcomes; while the characteristics of the generation being measured may match those of other groups, they may not have come from families in which the previous generation was educated or financially secure.

The relationship between student achievement and teacher expectations also merits further investigation. In particular, the presence of incentives for teachers does not necessarily address the fundamental assumptions and differential expectations they may have for different students, whether consciously recognized or unconsciously acted upon. What may be necessary is for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to develop a set of demonstrations with environments in which children who are often stereotyped can succeed and to identify the impact of teachers' perspectives and assumptions on the classroom environment and student performance.

Reconsidering Culture and Achievement

Researchers need to revisit their notions of the effects of culture on student achievement. "Culture has to be viewed in a complex presentation, since the issue of 'culture' interplays with so many factors," states Ira Harkavy of Penn's Center for Community Partnerships. "Culture counts, but it has to be unpacked and what role it plays carefully considered." However, the emphasis in the literature is currently on cultural and social capital as mediating individuals' experiences. The problem involves applying an often monolithic notion of what forms of social/cultural capital are appropriate, without considering the context in which they are operationalized. Isolated communities often do not have access to experiences that are considered to provide value-added social capital in the dominant culture. The challenge is to make the definition of culture more

The communities being studied may be able to identify common themes, problems, and strategies for addressing the underlying problems that allow achievement gaps to endure.

expansive and relative to a child's ecological context when examining the impact of cultural norms on achievement.

Furthermore, Gadsden suggested, "Researchers have to think about culture differently and decode it as a variable." Too often, she believes, culture is used as a static code or proxy for race and ethnicity. Cultures change over time, and certain cultural practices tend to become labeled as either "good" or "bad." While there are clearly some practices that do not contribute to academic achievement, Gadsden contended that researchers have to problematize the use of culture as a causative agent. "We tend to use it whenever we want to negate things that veer away from standard practices and attribute to culture that which we see as problematic," she said.

Moving Beyond Problem-Based Research to Problem-Solving Research

"The ultimate goal of research should be to enable our public systems themselves to make decisions that lead to improvement," said Harkavy. It would be not only innovative but also effective to shift the orientation of policy-related research beyond a focus on problems to problem-solving. Indeed, while it is clear that research needs an "implementation revolution," it is not clear that research, as it is currently construed, can effectively inform implementation. Harkavy said, "As academics, we stop at the water's edge and do not really know how to grapple with the translation of work in the world outside of the academy, simply because we do not spend time there." Unless researchers are involved in the implementation of a program they are helping to inform, design, or evaluate, they will lack first-hand knowledge of the pressures and challenges particular to a setting. Harkavy proposed reconceptualizing research to become applicable within specific settings and holding researchers accountable for the outcomes.

To achieve this level of integration, Harkavy believes researchers would also need to blend long-term and short-term approaches. "Short-term work will not provide adequate solutions to long-term problems," stated Harkavy. Researchers need to understand the settings and the problems embedded within them, which require a longer-term engagement.

Such a strategy leads to an argument for supporting research that is deeply embedded in local contexts, which would necessitate partnerships that bring about change in school settings and local systems. It would engage higher education in the radical transformation of school systems—making higher education and research both the subject and object of change, implicating it in the process of how to best advance learning. These partnerships could also involve convening multiple local sites and state-level governance in national dialogues to compare what is happening in urban school systems across the country. "At this pace, if we rely on leadership, we will wait forever," says Harkavy. "But if we rely on partnerships to carry the effort, the discussions could be developed more quickly."

"As academics, we stop at the water's edge and do not really know how to grapple with the translation of work in the world outside of the academy, simply because we do not spend time there."

Implications for Policymaking

As participants discussed directions for educational research on school reform, they identified a series of recommendations that conceptualize appropriate roles for policymakers and OERI, in particular, to support research and facilitate collaboration that lead to real change in schools and classrooms. This section provides an account of their discussion.

The roundtable's recommendations for policy included the following: (1) bridge divided realms; (2) promote collaborations that unite research, practice, and community organizations; (3) understand the interplay of federal, state, and local resources; (4) match the rhetoric of education reform with reality; (5) align incentives; (6) support the evaluations of interventions; and (7) shift the scope of change from the system to systems.

OERI can play a role in bringing together all of the constituencies of urban public schools and communities within a broader, inextricably intertwined context of social policy questions.

Bridge Divided Realms

OERI can play a role in convening all constituencies of urban public schools and communities within a broader, intertwined context of social and educational policy. David Florio explained that C. Kent McGuire initiated such an approach at the beginning of his tenure as Assistant Secretary at OERI. He believed OERI could, in particular, bridge the two worlds of the academic community and the urban education system by:

1. Focusing on a few clear problems to help build the capacity of the research and development community, particularly around the areas of early reading, literacy, math, and school organization and design in K-12 education.
2. Establishing planning groups that would guide competitions for research and the ongoing investments made in existing national research centers, as well as strategically tie areas of focus with results and recompetitions.
3. Engaging in strategic partnerships to bring together schools, educators, policymakers, and grantmakers to promote a dialogue around policy and program implementation.
4. Improving the resource base for research and development, which McGuire nearly doubled by focusing on problem-based research and engaging in design studies in which research and practice collaborated.

Florio believes that OERI has made progress on these benchmarks, but that a deep divide still exists between the worlds of research and practice, characterized by:

1. A weak understanding and valuing of each other's knowledge, worth, and motivations.
2. Few opportunities for interaction, which reinforces old stereotypes and false theory/practice dichotomies between "ivory tower" researchers and "thoughtless, nontheoretical" practitioners.
3. A sense of urgency that is out-of-sync with the pace of inquiry.

David Florio summarized how OERI could begin to build bridges across the divide between practice and research, as well as provide clear leadership to promote change in urban communities and school systems:

1. Provide an ongoing, sustained structure that overcomes the isolation of researcher from urban educator.

2. Focus both on the most pressing urban problems and on long-term programs of research with urban settings as their targets.

3. Build a community of teachers, researchers, and urban school system leaders on establishing leadership and bringing researchers and practitioners out of their isolated silos.

4. Create a short-term response mechanism that indicates what is currently known about critical problems.

5. Support proposals that integrate research and design to understand "not only the building itself, but also how the building was built."

6. Sustain the interaction among researchers and urban system leaders through intentional grant-making.

Florio cautioned that problem-based research may lead to robust results in the short-run; however, there is a specific need to deal with large-scale system issues when focusing on urban education. As a result, there should be a strategy to support research that focuses on a limited number of discrete problems and on structural and cultural issues related to implementation in urban contexts. Florio reiterated a potential criterion in Knapp and Crew's work: "Take the school system itself as the key problem in light of a powerful goal—the systemwide ability for every school to be successful in teaching every child to read."

Within these collaborative efforts, OERI should integrate a number of elements: mechanisms for sustaining the effort over time; a focus on literacy instruction; an emphasis on capacity-building in terms of leadership, professional development, and training; methods for ensuring that the initiatives go beyond the schoolhouse to include families and communities; investment in innovation; and incentives for brokering a new deal between research and urban communities regarding their respective roles. OERI can accomplish this focus through two mechanisms: (1) crafting and issuing a joint statement that articulates the interests and importance of urban education; and (2) connecting this statement to an executive order on the need to turn around low-performing schools.

"Take the school system itself as the key problem in light of a powerful goal: the systemwide ability for every school to be successful in teaching every child to read."

Promote Collaborations that Unite Research, Practice, and Community Organizations

The challenge within educational research of better bridging educational and societal concerns involves determining how schools and classrooms are situated within and impacted by the broader community and family context. One participant suggested that the best way to achieve this alignment is to promote research collaboration that brings the knowledge of teachers, school administrators, and community practitioners to bear on research questions and methodology—and then transfers the knowledge gained from research to schools and communities. These collaborations could be contructed around topics such as community literacy, job skills and computer training, and curricular improvement.

Mavis Sanders explained how notions of authority and power can complicate collaboration. "When we discuss collaboration, we need to examine processes for helping partners understand how the use of power can be shared and transformative," said Sanders. She drew specific attention to the cultural and linguistic discontinuities between schools, families, and communities and researchers and policymakers. Greater collaboration requires a well-planned partnership that takes into account the need to establish common threads across these different actors. She believes the focus should not be simply on the struc-

ture and organization of the partnerships but also the process itself. Partners need skills, orientation, technical assistance, and professional development to resolve decision-making, perform conflict management, and engage in group problem-solving. "Until we take the process of collaboration more seriously, the potential of partnerships to make change will go unrealized," Sanders stated.

If OERI's mission is to fund research to improve education, collect statistics, and distribute information and technical assistance to those who would improve education, it could also improve the role of fostering greater collaboration and communication among various constituencies. As Gadsden suggested, OERI is in a unique position to take a leadership role in developing viable working collaborations between university-based researchers, policymakers, and practitioners at the front lines of urban education and community services. While innovative efforts will make inroads by bridging discourses, such partnerships will require the establishment of a common understanding across multiple actors.

Greater collaboration requires a well-planned partnership that takes into account the need to establish common threads across different actors.

To promote this collaborative vision, it was suggested that OERI should retool its existing research centers and rearticulate their focus to consider the following points: (1) without regular dialogue that bridges research and practice, existing or future research centers will not realize their own potential for leadership; (2) without collaboration with other constituencies, the centers will remain distinct from teacher education and professional development programs; and (3) without research and development, education reform efforts will not benefit from the experiences of practitioners.

Understand the Interplay of Federal, State, and Local Resources

The majority of financial support for education is generated at the state and local levels—federal funding constitutes only a small proportion of support for education. Given the limited magnitude of the federal government's direct support to local schools, Braddock raised a number of questions about the proper role of federal dollars in funding research and evaluation at the state and local levels: How can OERI leverage its capacity at the local level to merge research and practice, particularly since the research funding lines and broader educational support base are not adequately related? How can OERI use expanded relationships with state and local education agencies in terms of funding for research and development as an opportunity to build the capacity of these agencies? In addition, if OERI becomes more focused on school improvement at each site, rather than in the aggregate, what becomes the federal role in knowledge production for discipline-based arts and sciences content areas and for basic educational research? Are there other, similar points of leverage within and across agencies and the research enterprise that would help support improvement and bring successful models to scale?

Match the Rhetoric with Reality

John Stanfield stated that the students who need the most assistance are often left out of conversations around school reform. Indeed, school reform itself tends to be targeted toward students who are "in reach" and not "at risk." If educational policymakers adopted an ecological perspective, they could conceivably help local education systems not only arrive at a more sophisticated notion of community but also determine how to include those students who are "falling through the cracks." In thinking along ecological terms, policmakers must carefully determine how to disaggregate the parts that constitute the whole in

this context: for example, the local economy, the conditions in neighborhoods, transportation, and learning that takes place outside of schools.

If policy links are not drawn between community contexts and student achievement, the rhetoric and goals of education reform will remain abstractions. Instead, roundtable participants called for policymakers to provide leadership in establishing a better understanding of how families, households, and neighborhoods affect students in the classroom. Moreover, when describing the connections between schools, communities, and businesses, social policy should avoid the deficit model—describing these ecologies as isolated systems, not dysfunctional ones.

How can OERI leverage its capacity at the local level to merge research and practice, particularly since the research funding lines and broader educational support base is not adequately related?

Align Incentives

Just as higher education and preceding levels in the education system must work to align the signals they send to each other, OERI and university-based researchers must align their mutal incentives. Chester explained, "Fame for a higher education researcher will not come from helping the school system." Placing higher stakes and status on research—whether it is applied or basic—that addresses school improvement would help to increase its stature and attract researchers of stature to this domain.

Another area that OERI could realign is the rift between basic and applied research. Gadsden mentioned that, while the intention is for basic research to flow to practice, it "never gets translated in ways that nonacademic communities can understand, while researchers themselves treat basic research as superior to every other form of inquiry." Many universities and researchers also fear that applied research will be supported at the expense of funding for basic research.

The concern relates to a need for education to improve the outcomes of all students—not just most students. "Basic research has always been grounded in attempts to educate all students," explains Barbara Lieb of OERI. "But part of the problem is that basic research doesn't actually drive the education of all children." On the other hand, applied research, which is usually intended to address a specific need, has the potential for far greater impact on actual educational processes.

Chester suggests that focusing on high standards, improving outcomes for all students, and engaging all of the systems that affect a student's and a community's experiences represents a helpful approach to forging partnerships—ones that will ultimately focus on implementation. The key challenge in focusing on urban schools and school systems is to change the political environment, primarily because educational constituencies and the general public need to see an "enlightened self-interest" in improving urban school systems and their communities. That self-interest includes realizing outcomes that benefit the whole of society, such as providing trained workers whose competencies meet the increasing skill demands of a global economy, as well as preparing young citizens who have a sense of civic responsibility toward and engagement with their own communities.

If policy links are not drawn between community contexts and student achievement, the rhetoric and goals of education reform will be abstractions.

Support the Evaluation of Interventions

Funding is not the only component for supporting interventions—they also require an information base, as supplied by evaluation and assessment, to sustain their improvements. "It is funda-

mentally a capacity issue," explains Trent. "If schools and districts fail to collect, maintain, and use data, we will have no idea what works, for whom, and why." He believes it is essential that support for formative and summative evaluations accompany federal resources for school reform. "When we know about the quality of success through the evidence we can gather, it will help us understand whether enough time is provided to capture the change that a particular intervention has realized," Trent stated. Even if such a timetable does not fit political timelines, OERI and other agencies need to allow greater turnaround time to continue the support of educational reform.

Just as higher education and earlier levels in the education system must work to align the signals they send to each other, OERI and university-based researchers must align their own incentives.

Shift the Scope of Change from System to Systems

Policymakers and the research they support cannot focus on change in urban educational systems alone. While a school system is a core component of an urban community, it interacts—implicitly or explicitly—with other public systems and social services that exist in a region. "There can be no system change without *systems* change," said Harkavy. "Those systems include universities, health care, social services, and job training, to name only a few."

OERI is currently funding research on K-12 education and higher education as separate entities. "What impressed me about the West Philadelphia Empowerment Zone was that higher education institutions were working with CBOs and with schools," said Lieb. "It emphasized economic development, school reform, and higher education involvement, and each system had a stake in addressing the common problems that linked the community and the higher education institution." The obvious benefit emerging from the project was its tangible results in improving the communities and outcomes of at-risk students without attention to content standards. She suggested, and many participants agreed, that OERI should determine how to place the educational system itself within a broader context—that of the other public systems with which it intersects.

OERI should determine how to place the educational system itself within a broader context—that of the other public systems with which it intersects.

Lessons for Practice

Participants identified a series of lessons for educators, school districts, and school reform model designers. Their recommendations include: (1) adapting and updating promising models; (2) understanding education and social services on the ground; (3) rebuilding trust; (4) building school-level capacity for practice-based research; (5) looking at teacher education and preparation; (6) pulling the right levers; and (7) contextualizing collaboration.

Adapting and Updating Promising Models

Several participants cited a number of successful education reform models, such as those supported by the Kellogg Fund in Minneapolis and the work of the University of Pennsylvania on revitalizing economic and educational systems in West Philadelphia. A host of other models offer promise for schools and school districts to adopt or adapt—the key is promoting lessons learned and best practices through accessible materials aimed at educational practitioners.

A host of models offer promise for schools and school districts to adopt or adapt—the key is promoting lessons learned and best practices through accessible materials aimed at educational practitioners.

Judith Johnson suggested beginning with the lessons learned from the Wallace-Readers Digest Fund, which invested in 15 school districts representing settings with the capacity for radical change. The important lessons for practice, as paraphrased here, were:

1. Funders and researchers should not "tinker" with a model or superimpose their own agendas in the classroom.
2. Capacity is important—particularly in terms of fiscal resources, reallocation, community challenges, state and local government involvement, and human resources constraints.
3. The delivery of instruction should be culturally responsive, and pedagogy should be a focus, beyond standards.
4. Information collection and management should be presented in ways that ameliorate its misunderstanding and misapprehension—in particular, that data are used not to punish, but to inform in order to promote continuous reform.

Understanding Education and Social Services on the Ground

The discussion of interactions between a number of public services—health and human services, the criminal justice system, and public welfare—with schools and school districts is a vigorously debated topic. Whether or not services operate within schools is an open question, but what remains certain is that the services that touch the lives of students, their parents, and their communities need to be coordinated across agencies and educational settings. One example is the School District of Philadelphia's Comprehensive Student Support Services Project, in which seven or eight base service units coordinate their work with families on various concerns. However, while school

Whether or not services operate within schools is an open question, but what remains certain is that the services that touch the lives of students, parents, and communities need to be coordinated across agencies and educational settings.

staff are made aware of each other's practice, walls of isolation still remain. School districts must work to advance beyond the mere introduction of new models of coordination to advance an understanding of how they can be sustained and integrated with existing social services to improve student outcomes.

Rebuilding Trust

The level of trust between schools and their communities has eroded in many urban neighborhoods. Parents and broader community representatives are continually left behind in both discussions and partnerships. As a result, they often hold little trust in their local school systems. Roundtable participants suggested that educational practitioners have a responsibility to re-establish district- and school-level trust in the social compact between schools and their citizenry and to re-engage their communities. As a first step, they must work to help parents suspend their sometimes warranted cynicism. At the same time, schools must deliver on their promises in order to help re-establish that trust. Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners alike can have a role in building better relations by collaborating around studies and initiatives that examine and promote civic engagement.

Educational practitioners have a responsibility to re-establish district- and school-level trust in the social compact between schools and their citizenry and for re-engaging their communities.

Building School-Level Capacity for Practice-Based Research

As Mitchell Chester explained, many urban school districts engage in their own form of research and maintain research offices that interface with a number of external organizations and agencies. "The School District of Philadelphia's office convened research forums with the tremendous numbers of universities and other nonprofit organizations that use the school district as a study site," Chester said. At first, these research forums served as show-and-tell sessions to showcase the studies and findings of each partner. In recent years, however, the forums have evolved and now identify the salient issues facing the district and make recommendations for researchers to tailor their work to fill specific knowledge gaps. The effort has also provided a forum for the research community itself to gain insight on what happens in schools and how their work can be better conducted and interpreted to inform practice.

School sites are prime not only for uniting the work of disparate researchers, but also for encouraging federal, state, and local agencies to provide funding in more formal arrangements to support the linking of research and practice to promote informed change.

Chester noted that the research forums were convened with no money or formal organizational structure. He believes that school sites are prime not only for uniting the work of disparate researchers, but also for encouraging federal, state, and local agencies to provide funding in more formal arrangements to support the linking of research and practice with the goal of promoting informed change. Such efforts do not simply preference applied research at the expense of basic research, but also support sustainable collaborations that are not dependent on the efforts of a current superintendent.

Similarly, Chester reported that most urban school districts do collect data, but do not have the capacity to mine those data in optimal ways. OERI and agencies at other levels of government could provide incentives for researchers and school districts to work together to exploit fully the available information. Such collaborations and incentives would help to focus questions regarding accountability and assessment, particularly as school districts are increasingly being asked to meet specific targets set for improvement. "Researchers and practitioners working together can help to describe for policymakers what institutional change actually looks like, what measures to expect," said Chester.

Looking at Teacher Education and Preparation

Many participants suggested that little is being done to affect the expectations of teachers for student achievement. While school reform often focuses on and gauges student performance, there are few, if any, measures of the quality of teachers. Braddock stated, "We test students, but we don't know whether or not a student is getting an effective teacher. Is he or she certified? Are they competent?" In light of this fact, Harkavy acknowledged that higher education needs to change how it prepares its education majors, given that it provides the reference group for teaching and instruction. Indeed, CSR may be able to effect the greatest change by making investments in teacher preparation to improve the quality of students' experiences in the classroom.

"We have been organized around the executive, but what would it mean if government departments—such as education, human services, and criminal justice—convened to talk about long-term priorities and change in a more meaningful way?"

Pulling the Right Change Levers

According to Jomills Braddock, systemic change will only occur when "we pull the right levers in the system." In other words, key areas impacting urban educational systems should receive immediate attention and could have substantial impact with minimal effort. Two considerations must be kept in mind. First, there must be an examination of the systemic obstacles that exist. Where is there an absence of teachers who teach subjects in their fields of certification? To extend the comparison with health care reform, are these schools committing a form of educational malpractice? If this trend is unacceptable in a non-urban context, why is it tolerated in urban settings? Practice-based systemic issues such as teacher subject certification constrain the ability of researchers and policymakers to address the problem. Second, in the absence of a systemic reassessment of assessment practices, there needs to be an examination of how to close achievement gaps in light of how testing standards are currently construed. Norming practices, in particular, represent a key area of inquiry.

In addition, as Gadsden stated, governance needs to extend beyond the individual tenures of superintendents and mayors. "Governors and mayors come and go, but the problems stay," she said. "We have been organized around the executive, but what would it mean if government departments—such as education, human services, and criminal justice—convened to talk about long-term priorities and change in a more meaningful and sustained way?"

Higher education needs to change how it prepares its education majors, given that it provides the reference group for teaching and instruction.

Contextualizing Collaboration

"Collaboration is trendy in an age of declining resources," asserted Stanfield. Yet the search continues for models of collaboration that really work. Effective partnerships will not occur without an acknowledgement of the political issues and power dynamics involved in achieving sustained effort over time. The first step is to understand that it is important to develop models that are not just vertical but also horizontal—that go one step further by linking efforts across communities and states.

How can local, regional, or national networks of education-community collaborations be promoted and become institutionalized? Answering this question will depend on the location of the hub of collaboration—within universities, city or school district offices, or communities themselves. The answer also depends on the extent to which trust and common language are established across partners as part of the process of collaboration itself. In addition, partners must be sufficiently representative—in terms of organizations, individuals, and communities. Race and age, in particular, are key perspectives that also cannot be overlooked.

Roundtable Agenda

Children and Families in Urban Schools and Communities: Increasing Opportunities and Promoting Change

Golkin Family Meeting Room, Houston Hall
University of Pennsylvania

November 30 and December 1, 2000

Thursday, November 30, 2000

10:00 – 10:30 a.m. — **Introduction and Overview**

Susan H. Fuhrman, Dean, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania

Vivian L. Gadsden, Director of NCOFF and Associate Professor of Education, University of Pennsylvania

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. — **Paper I: "Issues and Strategies Related to Improving Education in Urban Centers"**

(28)

Author: Vivian L. Gadsden, NCOFF, University of Pennsylvania

Commenters: Phillip Bowman, University of Illinois at Chicago
Mavis Sanders, Johns Hopkins University

12:00 – 12:30 p.m. — **Paper I: General Discussion**

Discussion Leader: Jon Supovitz, University of Pennsylvania

12:30 – 1:30 p.m.	**Working Lunch: Christine McWayne**
1:30 – 3:00 p.m.	**Paper II: "Boldness Along the Road to Greater Student Achievement in Urban School Systems"** **Author:** Sam Stringfield, CRESPAR, Johns Hopkins University **Commenters:** Gary Orfield, Harvard University William Trent, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana
3:00 – 3:30 p.m.	**Paper II: General Discussion** **Discussion Leader:** Christopher Ashford, University of Pennsylvania
3:30 – 4:30 p.m.	**Review and Synthesis: Reflections on the Day** **Presenters:** Margaret Goertz, University of Pennylvania Judith Johnson, Wallace-Readers Digest Funds
5:00 – 7:00 p.m.	**Public Forum: "Building a Supportive Vision for Children and Families: Translating National Goals into Local Action"** **Location:** Room 110, Annenberg School for Communication, 3620 Walnut Street
7:00 – 8:30 p.m.	**Dinner** **Location:** The Inn at Penn

29

Friday, December 1, 2000

8:00 – 8:30 a.m.	**Breakfast** Foyer of Meeting Room
8:30 – 8:45 a.m.	**Review and Outline of the Day** William Darity, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
8:45 – 10:15 a.m.	**Paper III: "How Research and Inquiry Can Inform Urban Education: Notes for Research Planning at OERI"** **Author:** David Florio for Michael Knapp and Rudy Crew, Consultant to the Office of Educational Research and Improvement **Commenter:** Jomills H. Braddock, University of Miami Ira Harkavy, University of Pennsylvania
10:15 – 10:45 a.m.	**Paper III: General Discussion** **Discussion Leader:** Mitchell Chester, School District of Philadelphia
10:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	**Working Groups and Lunch**
12:30 – 2:00 p.m.	**Review and Synthesis: Reflections on the Day and the Roundtable** **Presenter:** John Stanfield, Morehouse College Sharon Lewis, Council of Great City Schools **Concluding Remarks:** Vivian Gadsden, Director of NCOFF

Participant List

Fathers and Families Second-Tier Roundtable Series
Children and Families in Urban Schools and Communities Roundtable

November 30 and December 1, 2000

Name	Position
Elijah Anderson University of Pennsylvania	researcher
Christopher Ashford University of Pennsylvania	researcher
Marina Barnett Temple University	researcher
Phillip Bowman University of Illinois, Chicago	researcher
Jomills Braddock University of Miami	researcher
Deanna Burney University of Pennsylvania	researcher
Mitchell Chester School District of Philadelphia	practitioner
Odessa Clarkson Family Development Center	practitioner
William Darity University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	researcher
James Davis Temple University	researcher
Jay Fagan Temple University	researcher
David Florio Office of Educational Research and Improvement	policymaker
Susan Fuhrman University of Pennsylvania	researcher
Vivian Gadsden University of Pennsylvania	researcher
Preston Garrison National Practitioners Network	practitioner
Margaret Goertz University of Pennsylvania	researcher
Ira Harkavy University of Pennsylvania	researcher

Name	Position
Donna Harris RAND Corporation	researcher
Thomas Henry University of Pennsylvania	researcher
Sean Joe University of Pennsylvania	researcher
Deborah Johnson Michigan State University	researcher
Florence Johnson University City High School	practitioner
Judith Johnson Wallace-Readers Digest Funds	funder
Jeong-Ran Kim University of Pennsylvania	researcher
Velma LaPoint Howard University	researcher
Sharon Lewis Council of Great City Schools	practitioner
Barbara Lieb Office of Educational Research and Improvement	policymaker
Raymond Lorion University of Pennsylvania	researcher
Fayneese Miller Brown University	researcher
Scott Miller Consultant	researcher
Patrick Murphy Chicago Office of Public Guardian	practitioner
Gary Orfield Harvard University	researcher
John Puckett University of Pennsylvania	researcher
Aisha Ray The Erikson Institute	researcher
Lauren Rich University of Pennsylvania	researcher
Mavis Sanders Johns Hopkins University	researcher
Katherine Schultz University of Pennsylvania	researcher
Beverly Smith Trenton Public Schools	practitioner
Ralph Smith The Annie E. Casey Foundation	funder

Name	Position
Harris Sokoloff University of Pennsylvania	researcher
John Stanfield Morehouse College	researcher
Samuel Stringfield Johns Hopkins University	researcher
Jon Supovitz University of Pennsylvania	researcher
William Trent University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	researcher
Lisa Ward Office of Educational Research and Improvement	policymaker
Duvon Winborne D.C. Schools	practitioner
Barbara Bennett Woodhouse University of Pennsylvania	researcher
Stanton Wortham University of Pennsylvania	researcher